LANGUAGE AND UNDERSTANDING IN RUDYARD KIPLING'S *THY SERVANT A DOG*

Rudyard Kipling's *Thy Servant a Dog*, first published in 1930, consists of three linked stories, narrated by 'Boots', an Aberdeen terrier. It was immensely popular and went into five editions in the year of publication alone, but few modern biographers or critics have a good word to say for it.[1] The title alone—archaic, deferential, not to say cringing—tells you what to expect. If that's your first impression, the opening paragraph won't disappoint:

> Please may I come in? I am Boots. I am son of Kildonan Brogue—Champion Reserve—V.H.C.—very fine dog; and no-dash-parlour-tricks, Master says, except I can sit-up, and put paws over nose. It is called "Making Beseech." Look! I do it out of own head. Not for telling. . . . This is Flat-in-Town. I live here with Own God. I tell:[2]

Does it get better? For the anti-Kiplingite, it certainly does. Boots and his 'Own God' go to the Park, and Boots meets another dog, Slippers, with the result that his 'Own God' meets another 'Own God', or Goddess. You can guess what happens when I tell you that Disney stole this part of the plot for the opening of *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*.[3] Boots's Own God and Slippers's Own God get married, and Boots and Slippers—become friends. For Slippers is another male dog, and this story is about male bonding, not the production of cute puppies. Notwithstanding, Boots and Slippers together simply worship their Own Gods, with whom they go to live in the country, where the class-system is

in full working order. And as though wincing cuteness, slavish adoration, and reactionary politics were not enough, the focus of *Thy Servant a Dog* turns out to be on the noble sport of fox-hunting. In the second story of the trilogy, 'The Great Play-Hunt', *a fox helps a hound to teach a young child how to hunt*. At this point readers who have any kind of prejudice against Kipling may rub their eyes and wonder if it is all a dream, while those of us who love and admire him are tempted to avert our gaze. However we ought to resist the temptation. *Thy Servant a Dog* is not about doggy devotion, or at least not to humans; the title, in particular, is a satire on readers who don't know their Bible;[4] the relationships that really matter are between animals, and transgress boundaries of class and species; the book's tone, so lighthearted at the beginning, darkens and deepens towards the end, as the most poignant of these relationships is broken by death. The cunning fox who appears in the story has nothing on the cunning fox who wrote it.

It is striking that the language in which the book is written has been so little discussed.[5] As an exercise in animal utterance it has been compared unfavourably with the *Jungle Books*, where the animals have dignity and pathos; Boots's simplified vocabulary and defective grammar have been dismissed either as baby-talk or as a form of pidgin, all too like the broken English attributed to the subject peoples of the Empire as a sign of limited mental capacity and comic subservience.[6] It is this view that I am going to challenge.

Here is the title page of the first edition: THY SERVANT A DOG | *told by* | BOOTS | *edited by* | RUDYARD KIPLING | *illustrated by* | G. L. STAMPA. The typography constitutes a hierarchy. At the top are the title and the name of the fictitious narrator. Then comes the name of the 'editor', followed by that of the illustrator (who doesn't feature in this talk, though his drawings certainly contributed to the popularity of the book).[7] What we are being offered is a mediated text, or to be more exact the fiction of a mediated text. In attributing the tales to a fictional character, and giving himself the subordinate function of 'editor', Kipling was participating in a long tradition of English fiction, going back at least to Defoe. In his preface to *Moll Flanders*, for example, the 'editor' reveals that he has altered the language of the book:

> It is true that the original of this story is put into new words, and the style of the famous lady we here speak of is a little altered; particularly she is made to tell her own tale in modester words than she told it at first [. . .] The pen employed in finishing her story, and making it what you now see it to be, has had no little difficulty to put it into a dress fit to be seen, and to make it speak language fit to be read.[8]

The fact that Kipling's narrator is a dog complicates matters, because it is not immediately obvious what kind of access the 'editor' has had to the tale 'told' by Boots, or on what pretext Boots is telling the tale to begin with.[9] The editor here merges into the translator, another purportedly subordinate position which gives the author all kinds of license.[10] It is an intricate verbal game, of the kind

Kipling loved: to invent a language whose actual existence is purely notional, and which represents a form of consciousness or understanding of the world for which the English language offers only an approximate equivalent. Yet this approximation is the whole point of the game.[11]

I would like to spend some time in this linguistic world, which, when you read the stories, is an immersive experience; apart from a few dates at the head of a chapter or section, which of course the dog could not comprehend, there is no editorial paratext, no glossary or annotation; you pick up the linguistic conventions as you go along. An outline of the plot of the book will be found in an appendix at the end of this article; but this skeletal account necessarily leaves out most of the richly detailed texture of the dogs' life. Kipling had owned dogs for most of his life, in India, the United States, and England, and he was an acute and unsentimental observer of their behaviour and appetites. Here is a taste of Boots on the prowl:

> There was two hen-heads outside ferret-kennel-box. They were nice. There was Lady-Hen in barn hatching eggs. They were good. There was Ben-sheep-dog, which was tied up because of meddy [medicine] that morning. He had left his bone out too far. I took away to Micefield where Wood's Edge comes down behind Walk. I caught four mices by jumping-on through grass. There was some of very old rabbit lying about. But bad fur. So I unhad all which was inside me, and wented into Woods for drink in Middle Ride. And sleeped. (II 39).

To sum up: Boots scavenges the dead hen's heads, eats the live hen's eggs, steals the sheep-dog's bone, kills four mice, eats part of a rotting rabbit, and is sick. Cute, indeed! Quite a lot of the book is done as low comedy, in which the dogs incarnate a spirit of anarchy and exuberance. Anyone who thinks this spirit incompatible with feelings of shame, guilt, and profound, unreasoned attachment to the power that rules your life has clearly never owned a dog—or, I am tempted to say, brought up a child. At any rate Kipling put a lot of effort into conjuring this spirit, and in giving it an appropriate way of voicing itself. We should take this effort seriously. The examples that follow are taken mostly from the first story, which has the same title as the volume, 'Thy Servant a Dog'; but I would emphasise that the other two stories don't show much variation.

To begin with syntax. The method of narration is almost exclusively paratactic: it proceeds in a sequence of short declarative sentences, which are neither complex in themselves, nor linked to each other in complex ways. In the first two sections of the story, for example, there are 82 sentences, comprising 556 words, at an average of a little under 7. The longest sentence is the one quoted above, in which Boots introduces himself: it contains 26 words and is exceptional in grammatical complexity as well as length. Mostly Boots's narrative consists of a sequence such as the following, in which he describes meeting Slippers in the park:

> There is walk-in-Park-on-lead. There is off-lead-when-we-come-to-the-grass. There is 'nother dog, like me, off-lead. I say: 'Name?' He says:

> ‘Slippers.’ He says: ‘Name?’ I say: ‘Boots.’ He says: ‘I am fine dog. I have Own God called Miss.’ I say: ‘I am very-fine dog. I have Own God called Master.’ There is walk-round-on-toes. There is Scrap. There is Proper Whacking.

The events or actions that Boots relates are not even joined by the conventional ‘And’, familiar in biblical narrative; instead Kipling uses ‘There is’ as a marker, six times in this passage, thirty-five times in the story as a whole, of which twenty-eight place it, as here, at the head of the sentence. ‘There is’ divides events without notation of time, or of cause and effect; the sequence ‘There is walk-round-on-toes. There is Scrap. There is Proper Whacking’ is compressed but perfectly clear, and visually evocative; it resembles the economical format of a comic strip, in which each sentence occupies a separate panel, with the links supplied by the reader. These links may be comic, as here, but comedy is not the only effect:

> There were hedgehog in ditch. He rounded up. I said loud. Hunt Terrier came out of bushes and pushed him into a wetness. He unrounded. Hunt Terrier killed.[12]

Fewer readers in 1930 flinched at this matter-of-factness than would do so today, but I’m sure Kipling relished the idea that some of his readers would flinch —perhaps those who remembered Stickly-Prickly the hedgehog, who, with his friend Slow-Solid the Tortoise, so cleverly bamboozles Painted Jaguar

in the Amazon Jungle in one of the *Just So Stories*, 'The Beginning of the Armadilloes'. But rural Gloucestershire is a crueller place than the Amazon.

The narrative of the killing of the hedgehog is relatively simple, but the method is capable of more complex effects, in which the author tacitly suggests what the dog either cannot or will not articulate. Here is Boots relating the progress of a human courtship:

> There is more walkings in Park. There is Slippers and his Miss in that place, too. Own Gods walk together—like on-lead. We walk behind. We are tired. We yawn. Own Gods do not look. Own Gods do not hear...They have put white bows on our collars. We do not like. We have pulled off. They are bad to eat...

The simile 'like on-lead' is strictly speaking inappropriate for Boots, and is one of those moments in which Kipling could not resist stepping out of character in order to make a joke; there are others in the story, but the wonder is perhaps that there are so few of them, given the temptation. The use of the three-point ellipsis after 'Own Gods do not hear' and 'They are bad to eat', on the other hand, is completely credible: it registers the tedium, from the dogs' point of view, of the length of time the courtship takes, and makes fun of the ceremony in which it culminates.

The passage just quoted comes from early in the book, and you will notice that Boots employs either the continuous present or the past imperfect ('They have put white bows on our collars') to narrate events that took place in the past,

whereas in the later passage about his misadventures he uses a simplified form of the 'perfect' past tense: 'There was some of very old rabbit lying about. But bad fur. So I unhad all which was inside me, and wented into Woods for drink in Middle Ride. And sleeped.' In both cases Kipling introduces a number of technical errors which recur in Boots's speech: absence of the definite article, lack of grammatical agreement between singular and plural forms of nouns and verbs, frequent absence of personal possessive pronouns such as 'my' or 'his', invented verb-forms such as 'un-had', hyper-corrections such as 'wented' and 'sleeped', false plurals such as 'mices', and so on. There are also no adverbs, and in fact Boots almost never uses them; he rarely qualifies a verb at all, and when he does so uses similes instead of adverbs; when he wants to say that he ran fast, he says 'I went like rabbits' (I 18). In addition a number of nouns, often compounds, represent the dog's construction of the social and material world by means of analogy between things he understands and knows the names of, and those he does not: 'James-with-Kennel-that-Moves' is the chauffeur and his motor car, 'Harry-with-Spade' is the gardener, 'Shiny-Plate' is the moon, 'Bell-Day' is Sunday, etc. These paraphrases, more or less ingenious and successful, belong to the technique of reduction or simplification which is apparently at the heart of Kipling's imagining of animal speech. The most obvious explanation, and the one which, as I have observed, most critics of the book put forward, is that it represents the inferiority or limitation of the dog's understanding. This limitation may be compared to that of children, and some of the linguistic forms

Kipling attributes to Boots are indeed found in the speech of children in stories such as ‘Tods’ Amendment’ or ‘Wee Willie Winkie’. From the child we descend, with facile speed, to the child-*like*, the speech of primitive people. As the dog’s ‘master’, Kipling engages in an act of imaginative appropriation which is also an act of condescension, and whose linguistic code is a re-affirmation of his supremacy and the dog’s servitude. But suppose we look at the book from the opposite perspective—that is, not thinking of Boots as a primitive user of our complex English speech, but of English as a primitive resource with which to convey the dog’s mentality. Boots, according to this view, has been badly served by his translator; like many bad translations, the result makes the speaker seem dim, when the dimness in fact lies in the medium. *Thy Servant a Dog* does not demean, or make fun of, the language of dogs, but makes us think about the language we use to approximate the language of dogs.

Let me give one detailed example of this reflexive design. It concerns one of the commonest verbs in the language, the verb *to say*, which has the added interest of being itself a linguistic term. There is what you might call a normative use of this verb in the story, which we have already encountered: ‘I say: ‘Name?’ He says: ‘Slippers.’ He says: ‘Name?’ I say: ‘Boots.’ Kipling doesn’t do much with this use of ‘say’ or ‘said’ – it remains a neutral, colourless, functional marker of dialogue. But there is another use of the verb in the story, which has a different range of meanings. Here is an example, in which Ravager, the fox-hound, invites Boots and Slippers to a spot of bull-baiting:

> We went under Bull's gate in his yard. Ravager said: 'He is too fat to run. Say!' I said. Bull said. Ravager said. Slippers said. I got under watertrough and said dretful things. Bull blew with nose. I went out through fence, and came back through another hole. Ravager said from other side of yard. Bull spun. He blew. He was too fat. It were fun. We heard Mister-Kent saying loud. (I 15-16)

The first use of 'said' is conventional, but when Ravager tells Boot to 'Say' he means something else. The obvious meaning is that Ravager tells Boots to bark, and Boots does so. When the bull 'says', presumably he bellows. Ravager and Slippers also bark. Then Boots says 'dretful things'. At this point it becomes clear that the simple equivalence of 'say' and 'bark' will not do. Perhaps Boots's initial statement, 'I said', ought to be rendered as 'Over here, fatso!' and the bull's reply as 'Wait till I get hold of you, you insolent short-arse!' But the fact is we don't know. We may guess that 'Mister-Kent saying loud' is a volley of curses, but just as these are not fully comprehended by the dog, so the dog's 'dretful things' are not accessible to us. 'I said' or 'we said' are like boxes, all the same size and wrapped in brown paper. And yet this uniformity has an astonishing emotional range:

> We went to front-gate. We heard! We saw! Own Gods—very Own Gods—Master—Missus—came back! We said. We danced. We rolled. We ran round. (I 16)

> We came. We said soft. We rolled before feets, asking not to be pushed into Empty Places. (I 18)
>
> Moore said small to Ravager, but Ravager did not say back. (II 46)

That last example comes after Ravager has been badly injured in a road accident; 'said small' expresses the huntsman's tenderness and the dog's inability to respond as he normally would. There are many such instances in the book, and they form part of a larger pattern of opaque words and phrases which require the reader to supply what has been lost in translation.

The primitivism of Boots's language – his simplified diction, defective grammar, paratactic narration, and the rest – do not signify his inferior mental capacity, but the inability of human language adequately to render the dog's view of the world. As 'editor' of Boots's speech, Kipling struggles, like Defoe's editor, 'to put it into a dress fit to be seen', except that the unfitness lies with the dress. But the analogy goes further: like Defoe, Kipling knows what he is doing; the failure of the English language to do justice to Boots's story is a failure in quotation marks, a *performance* of failure; and in this performance Kipling discovers – discovers to *us*, if we have patience – that English has a further reach, that it has not exhausted its capacity to surprise.

Language wins by pretending to lose, masking its power as comic inadequacy. The test of such a reading is the book's ability to deal with serious feeling without either abandoning the method or forcing it to carry more than it can bear. Perhaps it is not wholly successful, or not successful throughout; I am

still in two minds about the pathos of the ending, in which Boots mourns the death of Ravager in phrases that feel a little too plangent, a little too polished. But I will end with an example from earlier in the book, and one in which the speaker is not Boots but his and Slippers's household enemy, the Kitchen Cat – a lineal descendant of the Cat That Walked By Himself in the *Just So Stories*, only more disdainful and malignant. Time and again she punctures the dogs' self-esteem, mocks their servility, and above all casts doubt on the bond between them and their 'Own Gods'. When a baby is born she tells Boots and Slippers what will become of them under the new regime:

> '*Now* you are only dirty little dogs. If you say too loud to me or Cookey, you will wake that Smallest, and there will be Proper Whackings. If you scratch, New Thick will say: "Fleas! Fleas!" and there will be more Proper Whackings. If you come in wet, you will give Smallest sneezes. So you will be pushed Outside, and you will scratch at doors that shut-in-your-eye. You will belong with Yards and Brooms and Cold Passages and all the Empty Places.' Slippers said: 'Let us go to Own Kennel and lie down.' We wented.

The Kitchen Cat's syntax here, which makes use of conditional clauses and the future tense, is more complex than Boots's own, but her vocabulary is the same and she too resorts to paraphrase or analogy to describe what she cannot name – 'New Thick' for the baby's nurse, 'that Smallest' for the baby itself. Her speech is not human speech, but her bleak poem of abandonment crosses the boundary

between species.[13] The dogs' terror of 'all the Empty Places' is our terror. This is what language can do, while seeming not to know how.

Appendix

THY SERVANT A DOG — OUTLINE OF PLOT

Thy Servant a Dog consists of three linked tales, all of them narrated by 'Boots', an Aberdeen terrier. In the first story, also entitled ' "Thy Servant a Dog" ' we are introduced to Boots and Slippers, their owners, and their life on a country estate in Gloucestershire. They engage in hostilities with the Kitchen Cat, and survive the advent of a baby who, contrary to the Kitchen Cat's malignant prophecy, does not lead to their banishment or abandonment by their owners. They also befriend a foxhound puppy called Ravager. Ravager has a malformed mouth—a potentially fatal defect in a foxhound—and there is a debate as to whether he will be entered into the local hunting pack; if he is not chosen, he will be put down. Boots helps to save him. In turn, Ravager helps Boots and Slippers to head off a bull in a field which threatens the baby and his nurse. On the last day of the hunting season, the hunt pay a visit to the estate of Boots's owners and 'blood' the toddler with the brush of a newly-killed fox. Ravager has by now established his place in the pack, and Boots is proud of his friendship.

In the second story, 'The Great Play-Hunt', the child, Digby, is seven years old, has his own pony, and is keen to start hunting. Ravager is pack leader, though he has a rival, fittingly named Upstart. One day Boots comes across Tags, an old fox who has caught his foot in a trap. Tags bites off two of his toes to escape, and Boots helps him by telling him where he can find food. Some time later Ravager is hit by a motor-van (belonging to a commercial chicken farm—'nice-kind-hen-killer-ladies', as Boots calls them) and is partially blinded. He and Tags are now both retired veterans, so to speak. Tags must make his escape to his retreat in Wales before the start of the hunting season, but he agrees to take part in a 'play-hunt' in which the unsuspecting Digby will be taught the ins and outs of fox-hunting. The 'pack' consists of Ravager and the two terriers. Ravager and Tags devise a circuit which comprises every kind of ground, every obstacle, and every contingency of a fox-hunt. There is no question of the fox being caught; the whole point is that he gets away. Digby, for his part, shows that he has the courage and intelligence to take part in the real hunt. At the end of the story he rides home on his pony, with his 'pack' at his side.

The third story, 'Toby Dog', begins in London, where Digby is convalescing after an operation. It is late autumn. A Punch-and-Judy show arrives outside the window of the flat. It is run by a dissolute working-class man and his equally disreputable streetwise dog, Toby. Toby feigns illness and plays on the sympathy of Digby's parents, who take him in (this was a well-known London scam, securing a comfortable berth for the dog in the off-season; come spring his owner will steal him back). Toby is taken down to the country, where we again meet Ravager and learn that all is not well with the pack he once led. The top dog is now his old rival, the feckless Upstart. Toby engineers a *coup d'état* in which Upstart is exposed as a coward and Ravager roughs him up; another hound then challenges him successfully for the leadership. Toby's owner duly turns up and reclaims him. But in defeating Upstart, Ravager has himself been fatally injured. Boots stays with him on the night he dies. Ravager is buried and Boots is left desolate.

[1] The editor of the *Journal* has nobly agreed to head the list: 'He also published the direly sentimental *Thy Servant A Dog* (1930), narrated in the embarrassing baby-talk of the terrier "Boots"' (Jan Montefiore, *Rudyard Kipling* [Writers and their Work], Tavistock: Northcote House Publishers, 2007, p. 161). She is joined by our President: 'one of several sentimental paeans to man's favourite pet that Rudyard wrote in his later years' (Andrew Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999, p. 552). Other disparagers (too many to quote here in full) include Angus Wilson (*The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977), p. 185); Marghanita Laski (*From Palm to Pine: Rudyard Kipling Abroad and at Home*, New York and Oxford: Facts on File Publications, 1987, p. 126); and Martin Fido (*Rudyard Kipling*, London: Hamlyn, 1974, p. 138). Brief exceptions to the chorus of condescension include Lord Birkenhead (*Rudyard Kipling*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978, p. 337) and David Gilmour (*The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* London: John Murray, 2002, p. 285). Charles Carrington is typically shrewd and sympathetic: 'not a beast fable in the conventional form, but a genuine attempt to present a dog's point of view, in a simplified vocabulary which seemed adequate to a dog's intelligence, an experiment in the rudiments of language' (*Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970 [first publ. Macmillan, 1955], p. 550); I take issue only with the phrase 'rudiments of language'. Only two modern critics deal with the book in any detail: Norman Arthur Fischer ('Empathy in Kipling's Stories of Humans and Dogs', *Kipling Journal* 87 [Dec. 2013], pp. 32-42) and William B. Dillingham, who devotes a chapter of his recent book *Rudyard Kipling: Life, Love and Art* (ELT Press, 2013) to Kipling's dog stories. Fischer's argument that the stories 'present a nuanced concept of empathy *within the world of human-animal interaction*' (p. 32; my emphasis) seems to me to be flawed precisely because he leaves language out of account. Dillingham, though he does take the issue of language seriously, seeing the dogs' speech as 'a product of Kipling's rich imagination and extraordinary originality' (p. 181), follows Carrington in calling it 'distinctly rudimentary'. His view that Kipling 'attributes rudimentary speech to Boots because he believed that elemental language depicting a dog's instinctive acts could be a highly effective and appropriate conveyer of elemental emotions' (p. 184)—in other words, that the animals are *instrumental* in a design which is really concerned with human beings—is fundamentally opposed to my own.

[2] Rudyard Kipling, *Thy Servant a Dog* (London: Macmillan, 1930), I 3. All quotations are from this edition. Roman numerals designate the book's three chapters (I = '"Thy Servant a Dog"', II = 'The Great Play Hunt', III = 'Toby Dog'). 'Champion Reserve' and 'V.H.C.' ('Very Highly Commended') are dog-show titles gained by Boots's father. He is a pedigree Aberdeen terrier. I am indebted, here and throughout, to John McGivern's notes on *Thy Servant a Dog* in the New Readers' Guide on the Kipling Society website (http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/bookmart_fra.htm).

[3] The encounter between Roger and Anita in Regent's Park, engineered by Roger's dog Pongo, does not feature in the original book by Dodie Smith (1956), which opens with the couple already married.

[4] It is taken from 2 Kings 8: 13, but 'taken' is the wrong word; Kipling wrenches it out of context. It belongs to the confrontation of the prophet Elisha with the king of Syria's emissary, Hazael, who has come to inquire whether his master will recover from sickness. Elisha sees into Hazael's heart, and weeps. 'And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. | And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria' (12-13). The King James version mistranslates; what Hazael actually says is 'But what is thy servant, this dog, that he should do this great thing?' He is being self-deprecating, not rejecting the idea that he could behave with the savagery of a dog. Either way he is a hypocrite. He returns to his master and murders him the following day, and as king he fulfils Elisha's prophecy.

[5] The honourable exception is William B. Dillingham (see above, n. 1); though I differ from his conclusions, he is the only critic I have come across who recognizes not only that the dogs' speech matters, but that it mattered to Kipling: he rightly draws attention to Kipling's letter of 6 Oct. 1930 to Frank Doubleday in which he looks forward to the success of the book: 'I do bank on its interest as a new convention of "dog-talk"' (*The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Thomas Pinney, vol. 5 [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004], p. 563). Dillingham's theory that the book's critical neglect was paradoxically caused by the very skill with which Kipling deployed this 'new convention' seems all too plausible.

[6] The use of the term 'pidgin' appears in one of the earliest reviews of the book: 'It depends, of course, on whether you like dogs and whether you enjoy reading pidgin—or dog-English; if you possess both qualifications, then Boots is the dog for your money' (*Liverpool Post*, 29 Oct. 1930, cited in 'Thy Servant a Dog. Extracts from Reviews of Mr. Kipling's New Book', *Kipling Journal* 16 (Dec. 1930), p. 117). George Webb, in a note on one of G. L. Stampa's illustrations, remarks of Boots's 'very broken English': 'I do not myself find his "pidgin" tiresome. [. . .] They [the dogs] say what they see and hear, and lack the critical

intelligence to look for nuances' (*Kipling Journal* 75 [Dec. 2001], p. 8). I shall argue, however, that this lack of 'critical intelligence' is not manifested by the dogs' speech, but by its rendition as English.

[7] *Thy Servant a Dog* was published in October 1930. It was reprinted twice in that month and three times in November, according to my copy.

[8] Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* [1722] (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1972), p. 1.

[9] Boots introduces his tales with a variant of the line quoted above, 'Please may I come in?' (In 'The Great Play-Hunt' it is 'Please! Door! Open Door!'; in 'Toby Dog' it is 'Please, this is only me-by-selfs'.) I take this to be the canine equivalent of the minstrel or ballad-singer's traditional opening: 'Come gather round' or 'Come listen to me', etc.

[10] It is always a question of power: in *Moll Flanders* this is marked by the difference between *making it what you now see it to be* and *to make it speak language fit to be read* ('it' meaning 'Moll's story'). The first use of the verb 'make' is neutral and constructive. It belongs to 'the pen employed in finishing her story', as though the editor were a craftsman brought in by the publisher as a matter of course; authors in the period often required this kind of professional service to 'finish' (to polish, to standardize) their irregular practice. But the second use of 'make' belongs not to the neutral account of the process of editing, but to the difficulty of that process in this particular case, a difficulty which has required the use of force *to make it speak*.

[11] There is an affinity here with the theory of 'nonsense' (in Lewis Caroll, for example) as a game, put forward by Elizabeth Sewell in *The Field of Nonsense* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952).

[12] Anyone who knows the *Just So Stories* will remember that this was Mother Jaguar's advice to her son in the Amazon jungle: 'She said to him ever so many times, graciously waving her tail, 'My son, when you find a Hedgehog you must drop him into the water and then he will uncoil . . .'" ('The Beginning of the Armadilloes').

[13] It is the feeling that haunted Kipling all his life from the moment his 'Own Gods' abandoned him in a boarding-house in Southsea when he was six years old, the scene of crime to which he compulsively returned.